SUMMARY OF THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS COMMITTEE MEETING FEBRUARY 4, 1999

The Accreditation Process Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Thursday, February 4, 1999, at 10 a.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Margaret M. Prevost of the New York State Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss mobile laboratory issues with invited guest Mr. Richard Spinner of the State of California.*

INTRODUCTION

Ms. Prevost began the meeting with introductions of everyone present on the conference call. Mr Spinner was asked to give an overview of how California deals with identifying, defining and accrediting mobile laboratories. The floor was opened for questions and discussions pertaining to the mobile laboratory issues facing the committee.

AGENDA ITEM

Section 4.1.2

Mobile Laboratory Accreditation

Mr. Spinner began the discussion with an overview of mobile laboratory accreditation by first defining the term Mobile Laboratory as a stand alone mobile unit capable of supporting itself completely by generating power. He also said that the State of California certifies mobile laboratories to certain "fields of testing," meaning that each specific analyte is dealt with separately to generate more revenue for the State. Ms. Prevost defined the term "shell" mobile laboratory as an automobile that would house analytical equipment and transport it and the analyst to a job site, complete the task and then return to the fixed base laboratory where the analytical equipment would be removed from the automobile and returned to the fixed base laboratory.

Mr. Spinner stated that the State of California has over 200 mobile laboratories to accredit, and that most of those (90%) were involved with leaking underground storage tank (LUST) problems. Their work has focused on initial characterizations and sight remediations.

Calibration

Ms. Prevost posed the question "How can the owners of that mobile lab ensure the State that the equipment has maintained calibration?" Mr. Spinner answered that presently the mobile and fixed base laboratories are responsible for maintaining devise calibration. Mr. Spinner agreed that NELAC should specify that in the On-Site Assessment section of the Quality Systems (QS) Chapter of the Standards. In addition to that, the committee and Mr. Spinner agreed that documentation of capabilities and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for each field of testing should be required for accreditation of all laboratories. The committee agreed that sensitive

equipment being loaded, transported, operated under less than perfect laboratory conditions, transported again, and unloaded could surely affect calibration.

On-Site Assessment

On-site assessment of mobile laboratories was also discussed. Mr. Spinner pointed out that in California a mobile laboratory is not only required to come to the accreditor's facility to show independent function and capability, but also the accrediting authority was to perform an on-site audit of the mobile laboratory on a real job site. Mr. Spinner also emphasized that the State of California could only audit 20% of the 200 mobile laboratories in California and that the approval of the laboratory's client was obtained before any such on-the-job audit was performed.

Types of Problems

A committee member asked Mr. Spinner about the types of problems associated with accrediting mobile laboratories in the State of California as compared with those for other states. Mr. Spinner listed the following problems associated with mobile laboratories and their quality systems (QS).

- On- site conditions such as temperature, humidity and proper ventilation cause various problems.
- Transportation of laboratory equipment often leaves a mobile unit with no backup equipment in the case of equipment failure.
- Lone analyst's are often on their own with no assistance from qualified technicians.
- In the field short cuts in laboratory procedures are often a problem.
- Down time between assignments will cause a lack of readiness of staff and/or equipment.
- Sample storage is often subject to available space in a small mobile unit and this can cause cross-contamination between field samples.
- "Rented" analysts are often unfamiliar with the equipment they are supplied with causing problems.

In reference to the relationship of the fixed base laboratory's accreditation to the mobile laboratory, Mr. Spinner indicated that, in the situation where the fixed base laboratory fails to complete its accreditation, then the mobile laboratory could not be accredited for a subset that the fixed base laboratory was not accredited for.

Field Measurements vs. Mobile Laboratories

The question about differentiating between field measurements and mobile laboratories was brought up. It was left unanswered at this time but Ms. Prevost said she would be speaking with Dr. Barton Simmons of the Field Measurement Committee and coordinating future teleconferences to include him.

Micro-biological Testing

Mr. Spinner was asked if California had mobile laboratories certified to do micro-biological testing. He said that California did have mobile laboratories testing ocean water as wastewater facilities dumped their effluent in the ocean. He stated that these mobile laboratories are boats, with their own unique difficulties in accreditation.

Suggestions

Mr. Spinner offered several suggestions to help NELAC and the Accreditation Process Committee in the area of mobile laboratories. First he suggested that the definition of what a mobile laboratory is should be added to the NELAC glossary. Secondly, he suggested that an excursion log should be required on all mobile laboratories to document the environmental conditions present during all analyses.

Laboratory QS

Mr. Spinner was thanked by all the committee members present for the information he had provided and he excused himself from the call. Ms. Prevost continued the discussion with the committee members on how to accredit all laboratories the same, notwithstanding their ability to be mobile, but no clear agreement could be reached on that issue. They did agree however that the QS used by each laboratory, whether fixed-base or mobile, would be key in determining the reliability and accuracy of the data generated by that laboratory.

Current Issues

Ms. Prevost called for suggestions on how to change the "90 consecutive calendar days" clause in section 4.1.2 of Chapter 4 of the NELAC Standards. The issue is how to certify extensions of a fixed base laboratories that would not only ensure the quality and reliability of their data but that would also treat them fairly and not inherently penalize them for being mobile laboratories. The committee agreed that QS audits of mobile facilities were the best solution for now and that suggestions would be developed later and passed along to the QS Committee. No other alternatives were offered at the time of this teleconference.

CONCLUSION

The next committee teleconference is scheduled for Wednesday, February 17, 1999.

Attachment A

ACTION ITEMS
ACCREDITATION PROCESS COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 4, 1999

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Committee will define "mobile laboratory".	4/1/99
2.	Committee will confer with Mr. Barton Simmons of the Field Measurements Committee regarding the distinction between field measurements and mobile laboratory operations.	6/1/99
3.	Committee will review the "90 consecutive calender days" clause and proposed changes to that wording in section 4.1.2.	4/1/99

Attachment B

PARTICIPANTS
ACCREDITATION PROCESS COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 4, 1999

Name	Affiliation	Address
Prevost, Margaret Chair	NY State Dept. of Health - ELAP	T: (518) 485 - 5570 F: (518) 485 - 5568 E: mmp03@health.state.ny.us
Baumgart, Mary Ann	MN Valley Testing Laboratories	T: (507) 354 - 8517 F: (507) 359 - 2890 E: qaumvtl@newulmtl.net
Cruse, Janet	IL EPA, Division of Laboratories	T: (217) 785 - 0601 F: (217) 524 - 0944 E: epa.6111@epa.state.il.us
English, Zonetta	Louisville & Jefferson Co Metro Sewer Dist	T: (502) 540 - 6706 F: (502) 540 - 6779 E: english@msdlovky.org
Griggs, John	USEPA/ORIA/Nat'l. Air & Radiation Env. Lab.	T: (334) 270 - 3450 F: (334) 270 - 3454 E: griggs.john@epamail.epa.gov
Hill, David	O'Brien and Gere Laboratories Inc.	T: (315) 437 - 0200 F: (315) 463 - 7554 E: hilldr@obj.com
Macelletti, Nicholas	CT Dept Public Health	T: (860) 509 - 7386 F: (860) 509 - 7295 E: nicholas.macelletti@po.state.ct.us
Pulano, Robert (Absent)	General Engineering Laboratories	T: (803) 556 - 1714 F: (893) 766 - 1178 E: rbob.pullano@gel.com
Spath, Peter	Eastman Kodak Company	T: (716) 588 - 0801 F: (716) 722 - 4406 E: pspath@kodak.com
Wheatley, Gleason	KY Dept. Environmental Protection	T: (502) 564 - 6120 F: (502) 564 - 8930 E: wheatley@nrdep.nr.state.ky.us
Ennis, J. Todd (Contractor Support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: (919) 541-7226 F: (919) 541-7386 E: jte@rti.org